

A Report to the Legislature
Rhode Island Afterschool and Summer Learning Program Act
DRAFT: March 18, 2010
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



I. Introduction

As demands on educators increase to deliver high quality outcomes within a traditional six hour, 180 day school year, it is imperative that educators and policymakers work together to provide the resources, supports, and services that can address opportunity gaps and better ensure that students graduate from high school prepared for higher education and the workforce. We know that time is a resource that must be fully utilized to achieve education goals, and expanded learning opportunities (ELOs), such as afterschool and summer learning programs, are a key support to help students reach those goals.

Afterschool and summer learning programs connect core academics to real world experiences and have successfully engaged students by embedding their interests into their education. Whether simulating crime scene labs to make biology lessons come to life; using music, theater and arts to teach reading and teamwork; using baseball to improve math skills; or infusing a physics curricula into learning how to sail a boat, the possibilities of summer and afterschool are unlimited.

Afterschool and summer programs have been shown to improve student achievement in reading, mathematics and other subjects, bolster applied skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork, improve social and emotional outcomes, and help working families and businesses. (See adjacent box)¹

For our older youth, afterschool programs serve as multiple pathways to success by providing career exploration opportunities, college access programs, and critical academic supports that serve as drop out prevention strategies and provide credit attainment and credit recovery opportunities. Programs can be leveraged to reach students who fail one or more

Benefits of Afterschool and Summer Learning

Over the past decade a substantial evidence base about the academic, social, health, and other benefits of afterschool and summer programs has created a strong case that they are important pathways to learning:

- The 2008 Study of Promising Afterschool Programs found that students who regularly attended high-quality afterschool programs across two years demonstrated statistically significant gains in standardized math test scores, compared to their peers who were routinely unsupervised during afterschool hours.
- A recent Brandeis study found that businesses lose anywhere from \$50-\$300 billion in job productivity each year due to parental worry about their children during the after-school hours.
- Evaluations of major afterschool initiatives have collectively found afterschool programs improved interpersonal skills, peer and adult relationships, self control, problem solving, cognition, self-efficacy, commitment to schooling, and academic achievement. There were also reductions in drug and alcohol use, school misbehavior, aggressive behavior, violence, truancy, high-risk sexual behavior, and smoking. (Marczak, Mary and Rachel Moreau, Summer 2002, page 14.)
- A 2007 study by Durlak, J. A. & Weissberg, R.P. found that afterschool programs that explicitly focus on personal and social skills also have an impact on academics, even if they do not have academic content.

¹ Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs, Deborah Lowe Vandell, University of California, Irvine, Elizabeth R. Reisner, Policy Studies Associates, Inc., Kim M. Pierce, University of California, Irvine October 2007

courses, become disengaged or want alternatives to the traditional path to graduation.

A growing body of research shows much of the achievement gap is rooted in what occurs outside of formal schooling. Generally low-income students learn as rapidly as more-privileged peers during the hours spent in school. Where they lose ground, though, is in their lack of participation in learning activities during afterschool hours and summer vacations. During the summer months, young people living in poverty often don't have access to essential resources that support their academic performance and healthy development. As a result, they experience well-documented setbacks in academic skills that contribute to growth in the achievement gap. Since 1906, there have been 39 empirical studies that have found incontrovertible evidence of a pattern of "summer learning loss" particularly for low-income youth.²

Together, these studies offer a compelling reason to focus education resources on providing summer and afterschool opportunities. Such findings are influencing policy makers across the country to increase investments in afterschool and summer programs with demonstrated track records.³ In 2009 at least ten states had afterschool funding in their state budgets including California, New York, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Georgia, Illinois, Connecticut, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Kansas.

On July 9, 2009 the Governor signed the Rhode Island Afterschool and Summer Learning Program Act (H 5802), which states in part, *"It is the intent of the general assembly to support a system of publicly-funded, high quality afterschool and summer learning programs that are operated through a diverse delivery network, including child care, 21st century community learning centers program, child opportunity zones, community-based organizations and public districts. By enacting this law, the general assembly acknowledges the need to adequately prepare all children to succeed in school and life by providing access to publicly-funded high quality afterschool and summer learning programs."*

H5802 directed the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to begin planning an initial demonstration afterschool and summer learning program that meets high quality standards. As stipulated in the Act, the initial planning phase calls for RIDE to:

- Identify incentives and supports to develop a qualified workforce, including opportunities for professional development, planning time and staff development
- Quantify the resources needed to achieve and maintain high quality standards based on existing quality standards in afterschool and summer learning programs

² National Summer Learning Association, H5967 Report submitted to RI Legislative Task Force on Summer Learning

³ Bolder Broader Approach to Education

Additionally, this report provides a brief history of afterschool and summer learning in Rhode Island that has led to today's broader vision for creating the most engaging learning day for children and youth. Within that broad vision the report discusses multiple interrelated strategies including afterschool and summer programs, expanded learning programs, and other innovative community based learning approaches that engage students and increase their chances for success. Finally, this report puts forth a recommendation for the key design principles of a high quality, state funded afterschool and summer program in Rhode Island.

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II. Defining the Language

In recent years there has been increased discussion over the language surrounding school and afterschool learning. What used to be described primarily as “afterschool” began to be called “out-of-school time” to include the productive activities students engaged in before school, on the weekends and during the summer. More recently, leaders and practitioners have begun to use the term “expanded learning opportunities” to describe the myriad learning options for youth.⁴

Expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) are structured initiatives that can provide students with opportunities for increased learning time, career development, academic support, youth development, enrichment, and experiential, project based learning. By providing youth with engaging, real-world learning activities, ELOs can spark new educational interests and motivate students to improve their academic achievement.⁵

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education incorporates this current language both in their newly revised Basic Education Program and in the Commissioner’s Strategic Plan. The Basic Education Program calls for “a system for the provision of a broad array of high quality expanded learning opportunities that will strengthen school engagement, support academic success, and expand all students’ educational experiences. Academic enrichment opportunities shall address diverse learning needs and capabilities, individual interests, connections to the community, and engagement in activities beyond what is provided during the regular school day. These opportunities shall include strategies that differ from those in the regular program either in use of material, instructional strategies or concentration of time on skills.”⁶ Similarly RIDE’s Strategic Plan specifically recommends increasing “...the availability of expanded learning opportunities”.⁷

Examples of different ELO models include but are not limited to the following:

- *Afterschool programs*: structured programs in out-of-school time that coordinate with schools and provide children and youth supervised and safe activities designed to promote learning across time,

⁴ Newdayforlearning.org December 2009

⁵ Supporting Student Success, the Promise of Expanded Learning Opportunities

⁶ G-14-2.3.RIDE’s Basic Education Program, p. 26,
<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Docs/RegentsRegulations/BEP.6409.pdf>

⁷ Strategy ASG 1.3, RIDE’s Strategic Plan, p. 7,
http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/news/pressrels/2010_PressReleases/RIDE%20Strategic%20Plan%2001-07-10 BORapproved.pdf

contexts, and developmental stages.

- *Summer learning programs:* structured programs and enrichment activities designed to supplement academic learning and promote enrichment opportunities during the nonschool summer months.
- *Expanded/Extended day and year schools:* school models that are aligned with education reform strategies to expand the traditional school day and calendar in order to balance the core curriculum with enrichment opportunities, often including afterschool programs.
- *Community schools:* full service schools that provide a range of integrated education, health and social services and supports for children, youth, and families across the day and throughout the year
- *School-community networks:* intentional connections between schools and community organizations for the purpose of promoting and supporting students' learning needs.
- *Online learning:* virtual courses and out-of-school-time programs that utilize the Internet and digital media to provide learning to students across time, geographic boundaries, and contexts.⁸
- *Credit toward graduation:* intentional processes to allow students to receive credit for high quality, standards-based activities and work performed outside of traditional school.

Rhode Island has many examples of the different ELO models described above. To align with the legislation, however, this report focuses specifically on the opportunity to develop a high quality, state funded afterschool and summer learning demonstration.

⁸ Malone, H., Weiss, H., & Little, P. (In press). Rethinking time and learning. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project

III. A Brief History of Afterschool and Summer Learning in Rhode Island

1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterschool and summer programs provide recreational activities, sports, and clubs • Demand increases as more women enter the workforce
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterschool movement takes hold with first legislation and federal funding stream solely dedicated to such programs • RI is one of first states to receive a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. • RI passes legislation to create full service community schools (Child Opportunity Zones) in high poverty neighborhoods
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand and number of afterschool and summer programs continue to grow • United Way of Rhode Island creates community schools initiative • Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA) is formed
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providence Afterschool Alliance (PASA) is formed • PASA and community partners develop statewide quality standards for afterschool
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PASA leads the development of the Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool • C.S. Mott Foundation invests in Rhode Island to convene a state leadership team to create a statewide blueprint for expanded learning opportunities.
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nellie Mae Education Foundation invests in RI summer learning demonstration project • Nellie Mae Education Foundation and C.S. Mott Foundation invest in RI high school graduation credit project • Rhode Island Afterschool Programming Cost Calculator is developed to estimate the costs of providing high quality afterschool and summer learning programs • Woonsocket Afterschool Coalition is formed • RI receives one of only 10 federally funded full service community school grants
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIDE includes expanded learning opportunities in its Strategic Plan and Basic Education Program • C.S. Mott Foundation invests in PASA for “New Day for Learning” Project; one of only two in the nation that is exploring how to maximize when, where, and how children and youth learn. • General Assembly passes H5802 Act to initiate planning for a state funded afterschool and summer demonstration project • General Assembly passes H5967 that creates a joint legislative task force on summer learning

IV. The Vision for Rhode Island

The work over the past 20 years provides Rhode Island with a strong foundation to develop a state funded, high quality system of afterschool and summer programs. In 2008, through the Supporting Student Success initiative, a Statewide Leadership Team, including the state education commissioner, the house majority leader, and other education leaders, teacher union members and funders, came together to take a “wide angle” view of the current efforts and determine how best to systematically integrate high quality expanded learning opportunities into a comprehensive approach to education. (See Appendix II for a full list of State Leader membership).

The result of this work helps form the vision for a state funded afterschool and summer program demonstration, including the importance of increasing linkages and coordination between schools and afterschool and summer programs to support student learning.

The ideal state funded system would:

1. Ensure that all children and youth have access to high quality, engaging and enriching afterschool and summer learning opportunities
2. Build on the existing afterschool and summer learning infrastructure and foster strong partnerships between community based organizations and schools
3. Hold programs accountable to the highest level of quality using standard measurement tools
4. Strengthen and expand the workforce to ensure the capacity and capability needed to deliver high-quality services
5. Include diverse funding sources to ensure stability and sustainability

To align with the legislative requirement, this report will next address the resources and supports needed to develop a qualified workforce and achieve and maintain quality standards. The report will conclude with a set of recommendations for moving forward with a state funded afterschool and summer learning program.

School- Community Linkages

Improved linkages and coordination between schools and afterschool and summer learning programs provide:

- Better access to information about youth and families,
- Greater alignment in content and curriculum,
- More and varied enrichment offerings,
- Unique, yet complementary, staff skill sets and expertise,
- Greater variation in instructional delivery methods, and
- Increased likelihood of positive relationships with youth and families.

V. Workforce Development

Research demonstrates that high quality afterschool and summer experiences are linked to positive outcomes for young people. Research also supports the fact that a highly skilled and well-qualified workforce is essential to the delivery of high-quality programming.⁹ It is imperative to continue to improve programs by ensuring that staff has access to comprehensive professional development opportunities that support their ability to strengthen skills, deepen their knowledge and achieve career goals.

In 2009 Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance and the Providence After School Alliance commissioned a report to identify the existing components of a professional development system in Rhode Island that support the afterschool, summer, and youth field, and to determine the gaps that need to be addressed. The study concluded that Rhode Island is a leader in the country with regard to “professionalizing” the afterschool field and is one of only a few states to have several necessary components of a program capacity building system in place.

The following table summarizes the interrelated components of a professional development system within the context of afterschool and summer work, and provides links to additional information.

Professional Development Component	Rhode Island Landscape
Core Competencies that define what staff need to know and be able to do in order to provide best practice when working with children and youth.	Rhode Island is one of few states that has a set of core knowledge and competencies for afterschool and summer staff. http://www.childspan.net/corecomp.html
A Training System that is grounded in core competencies, is responsive to the diverse nature of the workforce and is linked to higher education institutions.	Professional development opportunities are available through a number of community organizations in Rhode Island including RIDE, CHILDSPAN, RIASPA, PASA, and RI School Age Child Care Association.
Career Lattice and Pathways that link roles, responsibilities and salary ranges	A recent survey of Rhode Island higher education institutions found a strong interest in developing an afterschool and summer youth development credential founded on the RI’s core competencies. RIASPA is in the process of working with a Higher Education Coalition to develop this credential.
A Professional Registry that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field.	Rhode Island does not currently have a professional registry and this is a gap that needs to be filled.

⁹ NOIST reference

VI. Program Quality

Looking across afterschool, summer, and education literature several commonalities emerge as foundations for quality in summer and afterschool programs. High-quality programs include a broad array of enrichment opportunities; opportunities for skill-building and mastery; intentional relationship building; experienced and trained management and staff; and support for sustainability. Quality is also affected by staff-to-youth ratio, participation levels and years of operation.

Rhode Island is one of only a few states to have statewide program quality standards and indicators that measure program quality in key areas, as well as a continuous quality improvement process using a nationally validated self assessment tool. These standards have been adopted by RIDE's 21st Century Programs and other afterschool programs throughout the state.

Program Quality Component	Rhode Island Landscape
Program Quality Standards that provide a set of standards and indicators to measure program quality in key areas such as Health and Safety, Relationships, Programming, Staffing & Professional Development and Administration.	Rhode Island Quality Standards were designed under the leadership of the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) to provide a standard for programs to measure themselves against and work toward continuous progress and improvement. These standards have been adopted by RIDE's 21 st Century programs and other afterschool programs throughout the state. http://www.mypasa.org/quality-improvement/after-school-quality-standards
Program Quality Assessment Tool that provides programs with a continuous improvement process using a validated tool.	The Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment (RIPQA) is self assessment tool developed under the leadership of Providence After School Alliance. It combines the High Scope Education Foundation's nationally validated Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) with a supplementary component that addresses the unique needs and priorities of Rhode Island after-school providers. This tool for continuous quality improvement allows programs to observe and document specific program offerings and administrative practices in their movement toward program excellence. http://www.mypasa.org/quality-improvement/measuring-assessing-quality
A Quality Rating and Improvement System to rate the quality of licensed child care programs, identify areas for improvement, inform consumers about levels of quality, and target quality improvement resources.	Bright Stars is Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement system for licensed childcare programs serving children age 3 months to 5 th grade. BrightStars was developed by a team of local early childhood and school-age care professionals and reviewed by national experts. www.brightstars.org

(Placeholder for Case Studies)

VII. Fiscal Implications

Reliable up-to-date cost information gives policymakers, program providers, and funders the ability to make informed decisions about how to allocate scarce resources to support high-quality expanded learning opportunities such as afterschool and summer programs.

In May of 2008 Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA) commissioned Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA) to create an afterschool programming cost calculator. The purpose of the calculator is to allow existing and potential afterschool programs in Rhode Island to estimate the costs of necessary program elements.

Methodology

In March 2005, APA created and field tested a method for state policymakers and education leaders to use to estimate the costs of high-quality after-school programs. This step-by-step method requires states to first determine personnel costs (including program operation, time, student/staff ratios, and additional non-student time), the student population, and the costs of facilities, administration, supplies/materials, insurance, substitutes, and student transportation. APA also recommended that states account for differences in rural, suburban, and urban settings and in elementary, middle, and secondary schools settings for each of the program elements. The method relies on the professional judgment of experienced educators and program leaders to determine each of the component costs.

The variations in afterschool programs make it very difficult to develop accurate estimates on a national scale. Such variations may include regional cost differences, hours of operation, types of provided services, number of children served, ages of the children, special needs of the children, and staff-to-youth ratio, among many others. A cost calculator allows Rhode Island to define assumptions about afterschool programs, such as number of staff per student, type of staff in addition to staff salaries and benefits. Rhode Island can obtain much more precise cost estimates from a customized cost calculator than any other source. A cost calculator can be used to project and plan for the implementation of new programs, improve or expand existing programs, and conduct cost benefit analyses of programs.

A professional judgment panel determined the resources needed to deliver a specified quality level of afterschool services. The professional judgment panel included 10 Rhode Island afterschool program directors and leaders. Panelists reviewed and modified the lists of spending categories. They also determined existing salaries, benefits, and number of staff in each personnel category as well as current

expenditures for each non-personnel category (e.g. technology).

Because expenditures are likely to differ for programs with different enrollment numbers, it was necessary to make assumptions about enrollment in order to estimate expenditures. Panelists were asked to estimate resources for a program with 200 students, including 45 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, 30 at-risk high-intensity students, 20 students who have on-going contact with the juvenile justice system, and 120 students enrolled in the summer program. In addition to estimating the resources needed for the base cost for students without special needs and not enrolled in summer programs, panelists also estimated the resources needed to provide supplemental services for students with special needs and those enrolled in summer programs.

Afterschool Costs

Using the methodology described above, Rhode Island's professional judgment panel estimated the afterschool costs per student per school year (September - June) based on 200 students as follows:

Model	Cost	Certified/ Trained Staff	Adheres to Quality Standards	Program level Evaluation	External Evaluator	On-site Nurse/ Social Worker	Transpor- tation
High Quality Program	\$1,800/student/ school year	x	x	x			
Best Practice/ State of the Art	\$3,600/student/ school year	x	x	x	x	x	x

Other cost studies have confirmed similar cost figures for afterschool programs. The National Afterschool Alliance, using their own methodology, determined afterschool costs of \$1,000 - \$1,500 per student/per year. This methodology may not have some of the elements of a high quality program included in Rhode Island's cost calculator. Another cost study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation determined a range of \$2,000-\$4,000 per student per year. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality>

Summer Program Costs

The professional judgment panel used the RI cost calculator to estimate summer costs per student per 6 week program based on 75 students as follows:

Model	Cost	Certified/ Trained Staff	Adheres to Quality Standards	Program level Evaluation	External Evaluator	On-site Nurse/ Social Worker	Transportation
High Quality	\$720/student/ 6-week program	X	X	X			
Best Practice/State of the art	\$1210/student /6-week program	X	X	X	X	X	X

Caveats to Cost Information:

- State funding for afterschool and summer programs is just one piece of the funding formula to ensure universal access for all students. Other funding sources, including federal funds, private funds, and fees paid by participants (fees are less often charged by programs in urban areas), are critical to ensure sustainability and stability.
- Rhode Island currently receives \$5.3 million in federal funds directed to the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative.
- Of the 150,000 school age children in Rhode Island, a recent survey found that 40% are already accessing afterschool programs through existing funding sources. State funding would provide additional opportunities for children and communities that don't already have access to high quality programs.

VIII. Recommendations

The Rhode Island Department of Education recommends state funding for an afterschool and summer learning program, starting as a high quality demonstration project and expanding over time. RIDE is proposing a demonstration project rather than a pilot, because this initiative would not be testing a new program design (i.e. “pilot”), but rather would be demonstrating the efficacy of research-based best practices in afterschool and summer programs, generating local evidence to support the implementation of a state funded program (i.e. “demonstration”). RIDE is recommending this in keeping with our strategic plan to “Transform Rhode Island Education”.

Recommendations	
Target Ages	K-12
Target Communities	Statewide with emphasis on underserved learners ¹⁰
School-Family-Community Linkages	Programs will implement strategies that ensure multiple connection points between schools, families and communities
Staff Quality	Programs will be staffed by individuals certified or trained in youth development that aligns with core competencies as defined earlier in this document
Provider Selection	RIDE will develop a competitive RFP process based on the recommendations in this report and best practice
Quality	Programs will engage in a state-approved continuous improvement process--RIPQA
Workforce Development	RIDE will engage with higher education institutions and other partners to develop a youth worker credentialing system and ensure provision of high quality professional development opportunities
Funding	Programs will be required to provide a percentage of matching funds or in-kind contributions
Evaluation	RIDE will ensure the demonstration is evaluated using the most reliable cost effective design evaluation methodology.

¹⁰ Traditionally underserved populations include students whose family income levels are in the bottom 20%. Source: New England Journal of Education, Spring 2009 Issue

IX. Conclusion

Rhode Island's children and youth are most at risk in the hours after school and summer when they are not engaged in structured, supervised activities. Any investment and change that Rhode Island can make in how children and youth spend their time outside of the traditional school day will provide significant and long term impact for the state by increasing high school graduation rates, increasing the likelihood of college attendance, strengthening job preparedness skills and helping today's youth lead productive lives.

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